

committee. Biden reported him out anyway: Bring him to the floor. Let's have a debate.

That is what Senator Mitchell talked about. We had a debate. And he had pressure. It wasn't tremendous, but he had pressure. People asked: Why don't you filibuster him? He said: I am not going to filibuster. Let's have a vote, and that is the way it used to be done. He had 52 votes. Could that have been stopped? Of course. Would the Court have been better? Observers can make the determination themselves as to whether we would be better off without Clarence Thomas on that Court. But the fact is he could have been stopped easily, and it wasn't done.

PROTECTING AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am gratified that the Presiding Officer today is from the State of Nevada—my friend, the junior Senator from Nevada. When I think of home, I think of the desert, and you can't talk about Nevada as a desert only, even though the vast majority of the State of Nevada is a very arid place. Nevada also has beautiful Sierra Nevada—the Ruby Mountains. We are the most mountainous State in the Union except for Alaska. We have 314 separate mountain ranges. We have 32 mountains over 11,000 feet high. We have one mountain that we share with California that is almost 14,000 feet high. It is a beautiful State, but today I am going to focus on some of those arid places—the place where I was born and raised.

Having been back here such a long time—37 years—I often think of the blue skies in Nevada. They hover over a beautiful canvas. No one can paint a picture as beautiful as these mountains, which are in the middle of the desert, Joshua trees, or sagebrush. It is that beauty that is drawing thousands of visitors to Nevada and Nevada's wilderness every year.

Yesterday, the Reno Gazette-Journal had a tremendous article that reported just how important this quiet recreational industry is to our country. They said:

The big time solitude found in the big empty spaces of the western U.S. generates big money for regional economies. That's according to a study that attempts to put a dollar value on "quiet recreation" on Bureau of Land Management property.

That is an editorial comment by me: "quiet recreation." People are now biking, packing, and camping. Quiet is what is referred to as when there are no motorized vehicles.

To continue the quote:

It found that sports like hiking and mountain biking on BLM land generated more than \$1.8 billion in spending in 2014, that's roughly equivalent to two months of gambling revenue in Las Vegas casinos.

Our public lands are jewels that we must protect. To its credit, the Bureau of Land Management—when I was first elected here, the BLM was the hiss and

cry of government. They were on par with the Internal Revenue Service. No one liked them, but now they are admired. They have done a remarkably good job in taking care of public lands. As I said, to their credit, the BLM and their dedicated employees do a remarkable job in safeguarding these national treasures so that all Americans can enjoy them.

John Sterling, the executive director of The Conservation Alliance, told the Reno Gazette-Journal:

The BLM is the final frontier for a primitive experience on our public lands. They represent the future of outdoor recreation.

Unfortunately, there is a growing threat to these public lands and to the Americans who protect and preserve those areas. Most Americans are familiar with what happened earlier this year in Oregon when the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Oregon was taken over when a dangerous group of militants staged an armed takeover of the refuge. They came with their canvas shirts, camouflaged pants, guns, assault rifles, and pistols that were obvious. They had their all-terrain vehicles and set out to take over this Federal property, and they did. They damaged it to the tune of about—we don't know for sure—\$20 million. They defecated on some of the ruins and different facilities. They stopped the Indians from being able to do their annual fishing.

I am sorry to say this particular episode of domestic terrorism has roots in Nevada.

Ammon and Ryan Bundy—who are now in jail, which is where they should be—are the sons of Cliven Bundy. They were two of the participants in the unlawful takeover. Cliven Bundy is, of course, a Nevadan and has been breaking Federal laws for decades. I have been disappointed that some of my colleagues have supported this outrageous lawbreaker.

Teddy Roosevelt created the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. This radical President, Theodore Roosevelt—and I say that sarcastically because he was, in fact, a great President—created the refuge in 1908. Roosevelt used the tools at his disposal as President of this great country, including the Antiquities Act, in order to protect our national heritage so that generations of Americans could enjoy it, as they have for more than 100 years in Oregon. Congress created the Antiquities Act to empower the President to protect our cultural, historic, and natural resources when and where Congress cannot—or will not. These cultural resources are stunning. For more than 100 years Presidents have done just what Theodore Roosevelt did.

Our current national parks were created using this authority—not all of them, but some of them. In fact, 16 Presidents—8 Democrats and 8 Republicans—have used this authority to protect lands for the benefit of the American people. The younger George Bush used the Antiquities Act. Repub-

lican Presidents have been doing this a lot, but unfortunately many Senate Republicans want to undermine this act. They refuse to defend our cultural and historic antiquities that are being systematically destroyed. That is why the Antiquities Act was created—to safeguard against these threats in the absence of congressional action. Take, for example, a stunningly beautiful place called Gold Butte, the area where Cliven Bundy illegally grazed his cattle for decades. It is a stunning landscape.

Is this worth protecting? This chart shows the beautiful landscape. Look at it. This picture is not doctored up; that is the way it is. The sky isn't as blue as I have seen it so many times. We don't get a lot of clouds in Nevada, especially in this part of Nevada. We don't get many storm clouds. It doesn't happen often, but this is part of the greatness of Nevada.

Look at that. Is that worth preserving? Of course it is. This State has such magnificent areas. There are sandstone formations just like these petroglyphs, which date back thousands of years.

Take a look at this. This is a picture of petroglyphs. These Indian writings and drawings are centuries old. They are in an area we want to protect—Gold Butte. Look at that. The picture shows panel after panel of this magnificent part of history. But because of the trouble caused by the Bundys and their pals, the Federal employees have been prevented from doing their job of safeguarding these antiquities. About 19 of the vandals have been indicted. Most of them are still in jail where they belong. These employees have been under constant physical and mental threat for doing what the American people have asked them to do—that is their job.

Petroglyphs are being destroyed, drawn over, shot at, and stolen. This is an example of one panel they have destroyed. Look at what they have done. We can see that there are bullet holes. There is graffiti all over these beautiful Indian writings. These are not bricks that have been put in place. This is the way that nature has created this land, and they are destroying it. Look at what they have done. They have also cut pieces out of this and hauled them away. It is a crime, but they are criminals. They don't mind doing it, and that is what they do. What a shame.

This is only one example, and it is right here in the middle of the picture. It was, frankly, a vulgar drawing. They knew what they were drawing. They were telling everybody how they felt about this antiquity. We can see the bullet holes here. They used it for target practice.

The final picture I will show is the damage that was done to the Joshua trees. I know a lot about Joshua trees because where I lived and had my home for many years—and I still own quite a bit of property in Searchlight—has one of the thickest Joshua tree forests in

the world. These trees are stunning. They grow about two inches a year. They last for up to 150 years. People don't understand that these trees are so terrific. These trees have been brutalized by these criminals. They chopped this one down. One of my staffers said: Well, maybe they used it for firewood. Well, folks, have you ever tried to start a fire with cantaloupe? You can't burn this. I guess you can burn anything, but you will not stay warm. They are soft inside. It is not something you can burn.

We don't know how old the tree in this picture was, but it was probably 80 or 100 years old. Look at that beautiful tree behind it. It is really unfortunate, but that is what they are doing. They are just destroying these beautiful trees.

One of them who was part of the Oregon crowd had a brand. He went out branding everything with his brand. He stamped his brand on different things that should be protected. This is sad.

I have tried to protect Gold Butte for a long time, and the reason we haven't been able to do anything up to this point is that the Bundy boys and their pals kept everybody off of that property, and that is why I am grateful for the Antiquities Act. Because of this legislation, the Bundys are in jail.

I will reach out to the White House—and there is no guarantee we will get it done, that's for sure—to see if President Obama will protect this area. He has the authority, as any President does, to stop this sort of destruction and stop it now. Threats to our public lands are threats to our economy, our environment, and our culture. When we preserve our lands, we preserve America, and that is what we are trying to do: Preserve this beautiful place.

I say again: Is this worth protecting and preserving? Of course it is.

Mr. President, please announce the Senate business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESS TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 636, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 636) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune/Nelson amendment No. 3464, in the nature of a substitute.

Thune (for Gardner) amendment No. 3460 (to amendment No. 3464), to require the FAA Administrator to consider the operational history of a person before authorizing the person to operate certain unmanned aircraft systems.

Thune amendment No. 3512 (to amendment No. 3464), to enhance airport security.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, we have the FAA bill on the floor. I would like to discuss some of the amendments that are proposed and, hopefully, a couple that we will be voting on this morning. There are a couple of amendments—one offered by Senator THUNE on behalf of himself and this Senator, the ranking member of the Commerce Committee, and another offered by Senator HEINRICH. Both amendments deal with the issue of security but in different arenas.

Let me explain. The Thune-Nelson amendment applies to the question of perimeter security, of allowing employees to get into an airport—not the sterile area controlled by TSA, although, as I will explain, it can definitely affect the sterile area as well. On the other hand, the Heinrich amendment addresses security in the areas where passengers bunch up outside of TSA security, such as in a queue-up line going through TSA security, or passengers bunched up at the ticket counters, checking in their luggage.

Either way, as we saw from the experience of the Brussels airport explosion, those are very tempting targets for a terrorist. Therefore, the proposal in the Heinrich amendment, which I would commend to the Senate, is to increase the level of security, particularly with what are called VIPR teams, which, in essence, are not only at airports but at seaports and at transportation hubs.

Remember that in Brussels there was a bombing in one of the train stations as well. So we need to increase the surveillance and the security there, including dogs. As a matter of fact, our K-9 friends are some of the best that we have when it comes to protecting us because their noses are attuned to being able to sniff out the explosives that you cannot detect with metal detectors or with the AIT machine that we go through where we hold up our hands to see if we have anything on us.

It can detect if you have a package, if you have an explosive that is somewhere in one of your body cavities. It is going to be very, very difficult.

Dogs, because of their God-given sense of smell, can detect that. A properly trained dog is just amazing to watch. Now, interestingly, concurrently there is research going on at NIST, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, for an artificial dog nose, a mechanical item or a piece of software and hardware that would actually do the same job.

But that has not been perfected yet. That is going to be really interesting to see what they come up with. This Senator will report to the Senate later on that. But for the time being, the Heinrich amendment, which I hope we will vote on this morning, is concerned with that security that we have seen as a result of the Brussels bombing.

We certainly want to enhance security in our airports. Thank goodness we have the intelligence apparatus that we do in this country to be able to smoke out the terrorist before he ever does his dirty deed. It is more difficult for them to do it here in America than it is in Europe because of the alienation of those communities that then harbor the terrorists. We see the result in Brussels as well as Paris. That is the Heinrich amendment. That is a broad characterization of it, but basically that is the thrust.

The Thune-Nelson amendment is going at the perimeter security. OK, think Egypt and the Russian airliner. It was an airport employee who smuggled the bomb onto the plane, not as a passenger but as an airport employee. Think the Atlanta airport, 2 years ago. In a gunrunning scheme over 3 months, over 100 guns were transported from Atlanta to New York.

The police in New York could not figure out how all of these guns were getting on the streets in New York. They kept checking the trains, and they kept checking the interstates. They could not figure it out. Here is how they did it. An employee at the Atlanta airport—because Atlanta was not checking their employees—would smuggle the guns in. Then that employee had access in the terminal to get into the sterile area—the TSA sterile area—and he would go into the men's room, meet the passenger who had already come through security and was clean, and give the guns to him to put them in his empty knapsack, his backpack. This employee, over the course of 17 times, over 3 months, smuggled over 100 guns. Thank goodness it was a criminal enterprise, not a terrorist, because you can imagine what would have happened.

The Miami International Airport 10 years ago figured this out. What they did was, instead of having hundreds of entry points into the airport for airport employees in a very large airport like Atlanta, in Miami they boiled it down to a handful. There the employees went through similar security that passengers do to check to see if they had any weapons. They had a special identification card that they would have to stick into an electronic machine and put in their code, which was another way of checking to make sure that the employee was who they said they were.

Miami solved the problem after having a problem with drugs 10 years ago. Interestingly, in the interim, the Orlando International Airport, likewise, about 4 years ago had a similar drug problem. They did the same thing. They boiled down hundreds of entry points for airport employees to a handful. They had those checks. I have gone to see those checks at those two airports. That is exactly how they do it.

The fact is, we have 300 airports in the United States. There were only two that were doing this kind of perimeter checking. Atlanta then became the